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RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS PRIORITY 1939
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 001669

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/FO, AF/W, INR/AA;
STATE PASS TO USTR (AGAMA)
ENERGY FOR GPERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL NI MX
SUBJECT: NIGER DELTA MILITANTS' CASH OUT NO HARBINGER OF
PEACE

Classified By: Political Counselor James P. McAnulty
for reasons in Sections 1.4. (B) and (D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) With the announcement by President Yar, Adua that the Nigerian government (GON) would not extend the amnesty deadline beyond October 4, the two-month program has reached its half-way point with at best mixed results. Militants of varying importance have signed up for amnesty and surrendered weapons, while others continued to consider their options. Contacts in the diplomatic community have given a mixed review of results to date. Representatives of three Niger Delta states plan to visit Chiapas later this year to learn from earlier Mexican experiences in dealing with Zapatista militants. END SUMMARY.

NO AMNESTY EXTENSION

¶2. (C) President Yar, adua announced in early September that he would not extend his amnesty deadline beyond October 4. He warned that militants who refused to embrace amnesty would be "on their own." UN Development Program (UNDP) Peace and Development Advisor Onadipe confirmed at a September 4 donors meeting that, based on his conversations with GON officials, the Nigerian Defense Ministry and government had no intention of extending the deadline. He agreed with predictions by UNDP and diplomatic community colleagues that the military's Joint Task Force (JTF) may quickly begin military action after the October 4 deadline.

SOME KEY MILITANTS ACCEPT AMNESTY

¶3. (SBU) Several Niger Delta militants, including two major leaders, signed up for amnesty as of early September. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) leader Henry Okah accepted amnesty even before the amnesty period formally began August 6, pledging a halt to attacks in Nigeria. Shortly thereafter, MEND announced a 60-day cease-fire, set to end September 15. MEND Field Commander

Victor Ben Ibikabowei, known as "General Boyloaf," and 32 associates followed suit, accepting amnesty during a well-publicized ceremony with President Yar, Adua August 7 in Abuja. Associates included Solomom Ndigbara (also known as "Osama Bin Laden"), Toruma Ngogholo, Karikoro (the &General8), Africa Owei Ukparsasia, Joshua Maciver, Ezizi Ogunboss (&Commander Ogunboss8), Emikor Don, Reuben Wilson, and Great Nelson. Additionally, according to the press, Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) member Wisdom Amachere and militants Goodluck Mena and Dennis Gunnye, based in Khana and Rivers States, agreed to amnesty.

TWO ADDITIONAL, KEY LEADERS IN TALKS WITH GON

¶4. (C) Presidential Amnesty Panel spokesperson Timiebi Koripamo-Agary confirmed to the press that two additional, key Niger Delta militants -- MEND leader Government Ekpumopol, known as Tompolo based in Delta State, and NDPV co-founder Ateke Tom, based in Rivers State -- had begun negotiations with the GON. "We are discussing with them, but it is all informal." She said the GON had assured them the amnesty was "real,⁸ given concerns they expressed for their safety. Center for Environment, Human Rights, and Development (CEHRD) representative Patrick Naagbanton told Pol-Mil Officer that Tompolo stood ready to surrender because of pressure from within his organization after &significant losses⁸ from JTF attacks in May on his base at Camp Five.

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TOMPOLO PUBLICLY QUESTIONS AMNESTY

¶5. (SBU) Even while negotiating with the GON, Tompolo publicly questioned the sincerity of the amnesty program via an open letter to President Yar, Adua in a full-page advertisement in the August 31 &Vanguard8 newspaper, placing &99 percent⁸ of the blame for kidnappings, abductions, and hostage-takings on federal and state politicians. &Categorically, politicians, political and commercial crime merchants all over the country are the architects" of such offenses, declared Tompolo. He demanded JTF withdrawal from the Niger Delta, accusing the military force of &coup plotting⁸ and &wasting⁸ regional resources. He condemned Niger River dredging as an &attack on our existence and identity⁸ and decried alleged inequities in recent deals with multinational companies.

ASARI UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT AMNESTY

¶6. (SBU) According to the media, NDPVF co-founder Dokubo Asari appeared dissatisfied with terms of the amnesty plan. Based in Rivers and Bayelsa States, Asari had started NDPVF with Ateke Tom, but had split from him over financial differences. The GON recently released him after jailing him for treason.

MIXED REVIEWS THUS FAR

¶7. (C) We continue to hear mixed reviews about the ongoing amnesty program. British High Commission Head of Chancery Kate Airey evinced cautious optimism to PolCouns September 3, remarking that &something is better than nothing.⁸ Her Government, she said, wanted the process to work and has supplied technical experts on rehabilitation. If the program is judged credible, then she hoped the international community would support it, particularly after pressing the GON for years to implement amnesty. She expressed hope that the process amounted to more than just a &Nigerian solution

to a Nigerian problem8 limited to pay-offs to militants.

¶8. (C) In contrast, Mexican Embassy DCM Miguel Guerero Lechon opined to PolCouns and PolOff September 8 that, from Mexico's experience, the GON approach to amnesty "will not work." He noted that his Government had negotiated for years with &Zapatista8 militants, who like their Niger Delta counter-parts, had agitated for more equitable sharing of oil wealth in Chiapas state. Eventually, this movement faded away, however, after the Mexican Government invested in the needs of indigenous groups in Chiapas, providing them with modern comforts while respecting their cultural traditions. He noted plans for officials from three Niger Delta states to visit Chiapas by November to learn from Mexico's experience in dealing with militants. The Chiapas Government, Guerrero said, would provide accommodations for the Nigerians, who would pay for their air travel to Mexico.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) The scorecard of well-known militants who have cashed out via amnesty is impressive, but there's no reason to believe that these militants can or are even trying to bring their followers along with them. With decisive military force probably not a realistic option, and in the absence of a Chiapas-like community development strategy, it seems likely that a new generation of militant leaders would be ready to step forward in what should remain a very lucrative undertaking. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) Embassy cleared this telegram with Consulate General Lagos.

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